

THE WHITE HOUSE

WASHINGTON

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May 17, 1967

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E.O. 12356, Sec. 3.4

NLJ 9285

By , NARA, Date 3-11-94

MEMORANDUM FOR THE PRESIDENT

Subject: Implementation of NSAM-341, dated March 2, 1966

Shortly after my return from Saigon in 1965, you directed me to review all governmental activities in the field of counterinsurgency and to make appropriate recommendations to assure our readiness to cope with other situations similar to that in South Viet-Nam. The principal outcome of this review was the promulgation of NSAM-341 in March, 1966.

The effect of this decision on your part was to assign responsibility for the direction, coordination and supervision of overseas interdepartmental activities to the Secretary of State as your agent who was to be assisted by the Senior Interdepartmental Group (SIG) chaired by the Under Secretary of State and including as members the Deputy Secretary of Defense, the Administrator, AID, Chairman, JCS, Director, USIA, and the Special Assistant to the President for National Security Affairs. The SIG was to absorb the responsibility in the field of counterinsurgency which, since 1962, had been concentrated in the Special Group (CI) and, in addition, was to serve as a focal point for decisions on all important interdepartmental matters arising overseas.

During the past year, I have naturally watched the implementation of this decision with great interest, hoping that the procedures directed by NSAM-341 would bring method and flexibility into the conduct of our overseas business and remove our dependence on the initiative of individual officials or on ad hoc committees which, in the past, have often been improvised to deal with critical overseas issues.

I regret to say that it is my opinion as a bystander that the SIG and the supporting interdepartmental committees at the level of the Assistant Secretaries of State have not fulfilled the hopes which we had for them more than a year ago. Far from being a forum regularly used by senior officials to discharge expeditiously their interrelated overseas problems, the SIG has met with decreasing frequency during the last year. In the last six months of 1966, the SIG met three times and has met only twice in 1967. It is significant that it has taken no part in the conduct of our most serious and complicated overseas operation--Viet-Nam. I find little indication on the agenda of its infrequent meetings of any serious attention to counterinsurgency and matters related to "Wars of Liberation," a task which required almost weekly meetings on the part of the old Special Group (CI). My overall impression is that the intent of NSAM-341 has been only partially fulfilled and that whatever vitality the new system had at the outset is apparently on the decline.

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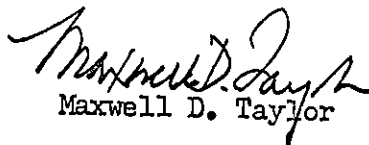
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Rather than allow the NSAM concept to die from atrophy as it seems to be doing, I would suggest at least one final look to see whether we should formally abandon it, try again to set it in motion, or seek a better alternative. There are several courses you might consider. (1) One would be to ask the heads of all departments and agencies represented on the SIG to comment to you on the effectiveness of the NSAM-341 concept, the desirability of its retention, and the possibility for improved implementation. (2) Another would be to ask only the Secretary of State to make such a report. (3) A third would be to ask some outsider with government experience to review the situation for you. Personally, I would be inclined to recommend the first course with Walt Rostow charged with getting the views of the SIG members.

I prepared a memorandum for you of this nature in March of this year but withheld it because of information which I had received that Dr. Tom Schelling of Harvard was being sought by State to become an Assistant Secretary with the primary mission of assisting in the implementation of NSAM-341. As I am now informed that Dr. Schelling has declined the position, I would feel remiss in not calling this situation to your attention.


Maxwell D. Taylor

Alternative _____ approved

No action now _____

See me _____

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